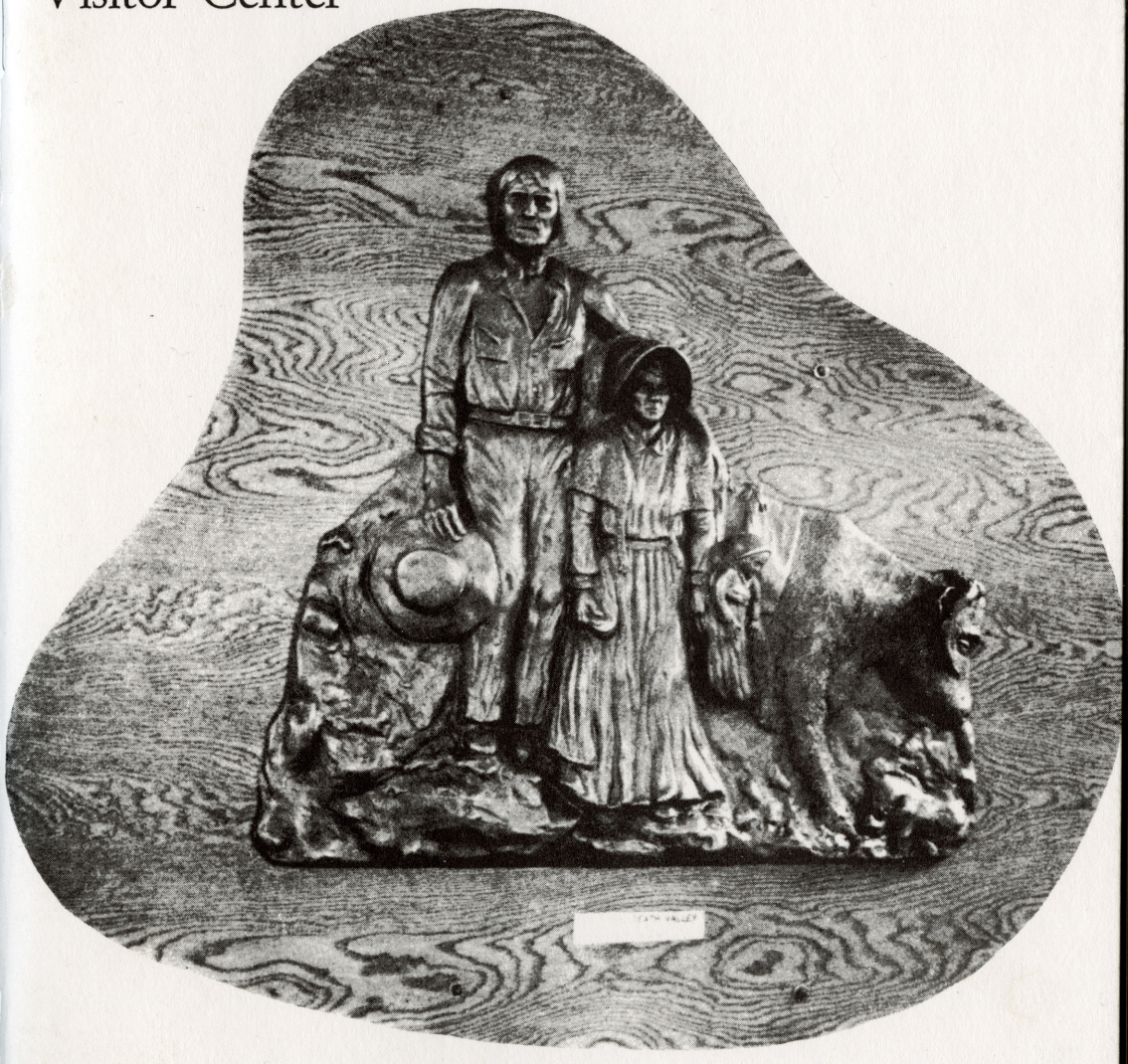
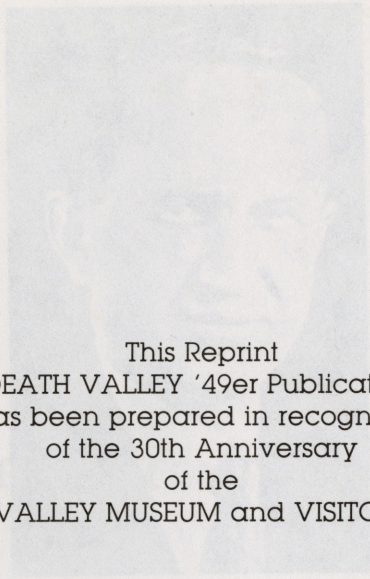
The Story of
DEATH VALLEY
Its Museum and
Visitor Center



Plaque by Cyria Henderson

Published by the Death Valley '49ers, Inc.



This Reprint
of DEATH VALLEY '49er Publication #6
has been prepared in recognition
of the 30th Anniversary
of the
DEATH VALLEY MUSEUM and VISITOR CENTER

Horace M. Albright

The Death Valley National Monument, Its Museum and Visitor Center

By Horace M. Albright
and Others

Horace Albright, who served as Director of the National Park Service, tells for the first time the fascinating behind the scenes story of how the Death Valley National Monument was created. Other writers tell of the unique cooperation of State, Federal and Private agencies which made possible the monument's new Museum and Visitor Center.

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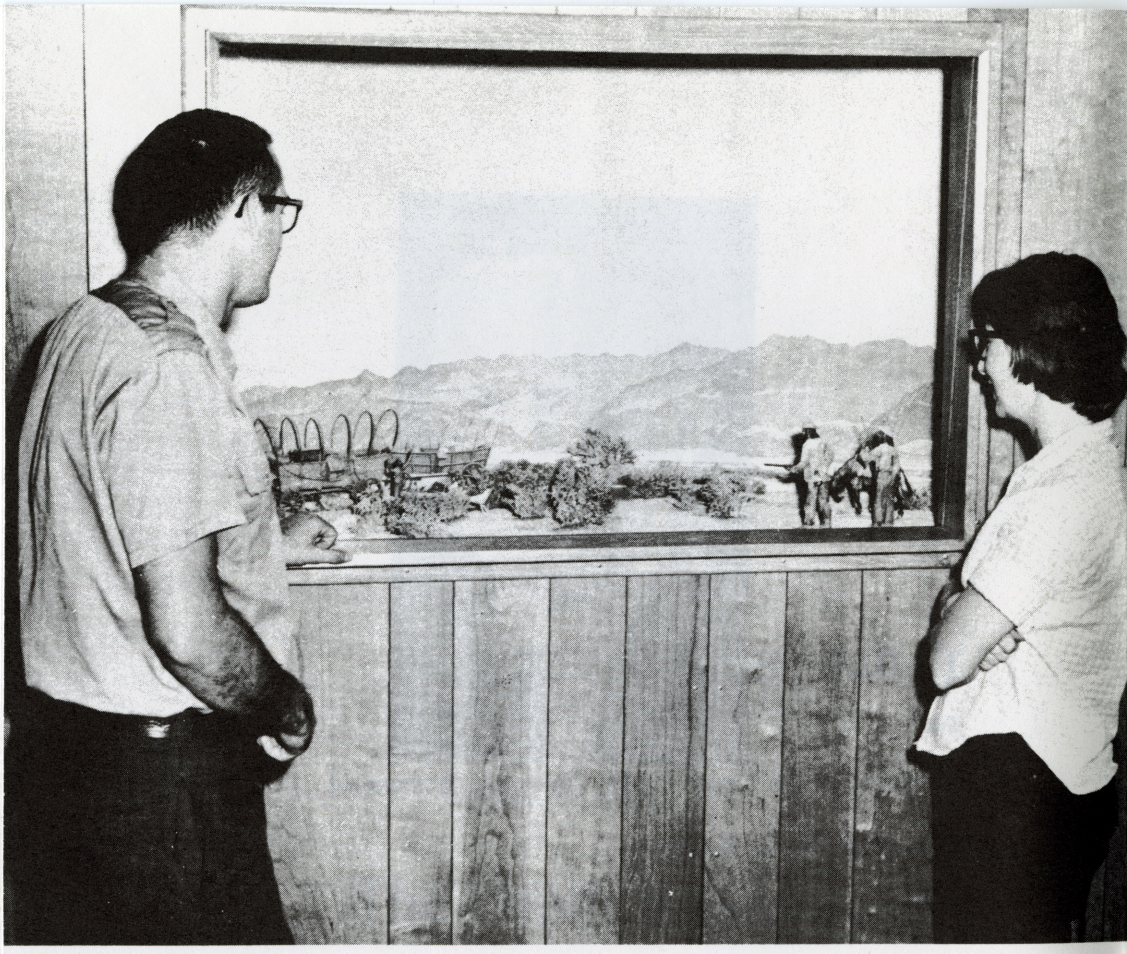


Roland "R O" Wauer, park naturalist, and Miss Jean Rodeck, curator from Western Museum Lab.

CREATION OF THE DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL MONUMENT

By HORACE M. ALBRIGHT

EDITOR'S NOTE: Horace M. Albright, Director of the National Park Service when the Death Valley National Monument was created, recently told an eastern historical group about hitherto unpublished events leading up to the proclamation of February 11, 1933. With minor condensation Mr. Albright's address is reprinted here with his permission.

Death Valley is one of the largest and most interesting areas of the National Park System. Located in the eastern part of California with a small overlap in Nevada, it is a rugged, colorful region of desert, mountains, canyons, strange geological formations and rare plants. Trees and water are scarce.

Since 1933 this region has been the Death Valley National Monument, a reservation of 1,907,760 acres or 2,980 square miles—600 miles larger than the State of Delaware. North and west of a spot called Badwater are two places with elevation 282 feet below sea level, the lowest points in the United States. It is interesting to note that Mt. Whitney, 14,496 feet above sea level, lies in the same county —Inyo. This is the highest point in the United States exclusive of Alaska.

Death Valley's history is a fascinating one. Parties en route to the gold fields of California in 1849, seeking a route to avoid the High Sierra Nevada snows of winter, found themselves in this unknown territory and underwent terrible suffering. Some died. Wagons had to be destroyed for fuel and oxen for food. One party on its way out under guidance of two young men who had discovered a way to the settlements, named the place "Death Valley."

In the 111 years that have passed since the valley's discovery and the tragedy that accompanied it, the terrain has changed very little. There has been wide prospecting for minerals and some mining, chiefly for borax. There are some mining ghost towns in and on the valley's borders.

With water from the Furnace Creek watershed a date grove was planted years ago on the valley floor and this flourishes today.

Among the prospectors were many interesting characters, some of whom spent much of their lives in search of the deposits they hoped would make them rich. One of these was Walter Scott who had been in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. He came to stay in Death Valley about the turn of the century. Some few years later he was employed to guide a wealthy young man in the desert in quest, not of minerals but of health. This man, Albert M. Johnson of Chicago, and Death Valley Scotty developed a friendship that was to remain close and strong to the end of their days.

These men play prominent parts in my story. Let me say that I was born and reared about 150 miles from the center of Death Valley and, when a boy of 17, my father and I met Scotty in the hotel in the village of Big Pine in the Owens Valley. So it was that I knew Scotty for nearly 50 years.

I have introduced Scotty because he and his partner play a part in the main theme of my story which is an event in the history of California and of the National Park Service which has never appeared in print, and one which I have never described except to individuals and small groups of interested persons.

I do not think a proposal to make Death Valley a national monument or a national park was made prior to the latter part of 1926. In that year the Pacific Coast Borax Co. was completing its new mine on the Mojave Desert west of Barstow, near the tiny community of Kramer, and erecting its own town of Boron nearby. The company was bringing to an end its long period of operations in and near Death Valley, and preparing to place its extensive mining and refining properties there on an inactive basis, maintaining them for possible renewal use but not contemplating production in the foreseeable future.

Simultaneously, conscious of the company's place in the economy of Inyo County and because of years of personal devotion to the Death Valley region, the officers of the company, through a subsidiary, had authorized construction of a resort hotel at sea level near the mouth of Furnace Creek Wash. It was also developing tourist accommodations at Furnace Creek Ranch on the floor of Death Valley where it was growing dates. These business men firmly believed that Death Valley's scenery, climate, and unique natural features placed it among the great tourist attractions of the nation. It was natural for them to think of national park status for the valley.

The first step, they believed, was to interest Director Stephen T. Mather of the National Park Service. As a young man he had been an employe of the Pacific Coast Borax Co. He had been the first man in charge of the Chicago office and it was he who designed the famous 20 mule team brand trademark for packaged borax products. Later Mr. Mather and a partner had developed a borax business of their own.

Mr. Mather promised to visit Death Valley and arrived in January 1927 accompanied by some of his associates and by a group of company officials. He arrived on the then operating Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad, and made the return trip to Barstow by automobile. In Director Mather's party were the assistant field director and myself as representatives of the National Park Service; Howard H. Hays, then operator of facilities in Sequoia and other national parks and now publisher of the Riverside Press-Enterprise; several officials of the Union Pacific Railroad who were interested in passenger traffic; and Messrs. R. C. Baker, C. B. Zabriskie, Frank M. Jenifer and Harry P. Gower of the Pacific Coast Borax Co.

The party was deeply impressed by the scenic features of Death Valley, considering them as outstanding in formation and color, and in other respects worthy of inclusion in the national park system. However, the matter of boundaries could not be studied. There were many mining claims

Lobby of Death Valley Museum and Visitor Center

in the area. Scarcity of water presented problems and there was the temper of the people in the desert region to be considered. There was no widespread demand for national park status and it seemed doubtful if any could be expected at the time. Furthermore, Mr. Mather, having been associated with the Pacific Coast Borax Co. when a young man, and still being in the borax business, felt it might be embarrassing to him and to the Interior Department if he acted on the proposal without widespread discussion and much further investigation.

Director Mather became seriously ill in November, 1928, and, in January, 1929, resigned as head of the National Park Service. I was appointed to succeed him. As I have already stated, Inyo County was home country to me and, while I had not been in the borax business, I felt I should proceed slowly on the Death Valley park proposal both because of many questions needing study, and because I might be unfairly accused of trying to do something at the Nation's expense for my boyhood friends and their communities. However, I assembled literature and information about Death Valley. Then I had studies of the region made by

Roger W. Toll, then superintendent of Yellowstone National Park; by Charles Goff Thomson, superintendent of Yosemite National Park; and by other members of the National Park Service organization.

Every report coming to me favored giving Death Valley a national park or national monument status. Boundaries were suggested, maps drawn, even legislation tentatively drafted. The next year I recommended a temporary withdrawal of the Death Valley region for study and classification. This was done by Executive Order 5048 dated July 25, 1930, thus holding the area in status quo pending a final decision as to what action should be taken on the national park proposal.

I reviewed the project with the late Harry L. Englebright, congressman from the mountain section of California, and with U.S. Senator Hiram Johnson. They were favorable to our tentative plans but wondered if local support would be forthcoming and speculated whether any move in Congress might not bring adverse pressure from mining interests.

Inquiring further into the question we soon discovered there would be serious objection from Inyo County citizens and from mining interests if we proposed a national park closed to all exploitation of Death Valley's minerals. Even Pacific Coast Borax Co. officials doubted whether we should ask legislation prohibiting mining in Death Valley, despite the fact such a provision could not interfere with extraction of ores from lands already in private ownership.

Faced with such opposition to the national park project, even though there was agreement that Death Valley's natural features entitled it to such status, we next considered having the valley made a national monument in accordance with provisions of the Lacey Act of June 8, 1906, under which the President by proclamation can declare an area to be reserved from all forms of resource exploitation except for public enjoyment. By now we were in late 1931. Almost three years had passed since I had become director

of the Service and the Death Valley studies had been so thorough I felt strong enough to move toward establishing the Death Valley National Monument. President Herbert Hoover and Secretary of Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur had become interested and seemed ready to act not only for Death Valley but also for the great Saguaro Desert region near Tucson, Ariz.

With the aid of Congressmen Englebright of California and Samuel Arentz of Nevada we tested public opinion in the regions bordering Death Valley. We encountered opposition from mining interests, particularly prospectors. We decided to proceed with the monument project coupled with a promise to immediately obtain legislation authorizing continuance of mining and prospecting in the area. We thought Death Valley deserved protection at once. We also considered that the mining provision might be repealed in later years, particularly if no new mines were opened.

The temporary withdrawal of 1930 had been reported in the newspapers and the National Park Service made all possible efforts to see that what had been done was generally understood. We were ready to proceed with the proclamation of permanent reservation when I received a telephone call from Congressman Arentz saying he wanted to bring a friend in to see me.

When the Congressman arrived at my office he had with him Albert M. Johnson whom he simply introduced as "Mr. Johnson." I did not know the gentleman but ccrdially welcomed him. Arentz, a big jovial fellow with a hearty laugh, then told several jokes on me, or at least applied some of his jokes to me. Both men laughed heartily—and so did I. At length Congressman Arentz came to the subject of the interview. Mr. Johnson was the partner of Death Valley Scotty. It was Johnson's money that had enabled Scott to carry through many extraordinary projects over a period of 25 years, such as bringing out of Death Valley large quantities of gold on a pack mule. He and Scotty had built a castle in Grapevine Canyon spending, so Mr.

Johnson said, nearly $2,000,000 on the structure, utilities, landscaping, etc. but he failed to obtain title to the land the castle occupied. Now, temporary withdrawal inhibited the obtaining of title. He wanted the withdrawal modified to exclude the castle lands, so they could file on them and achieve ownership by full compliance with the land laws.

It was now my turn to have some fun. I asked for floor plans and living facilities information. I said it would be ideal as headquarters for a national park; that it had been built on government land; that it belonged to the government so we were going to keep it and use it for park administration. I managed to keep a solemn face as I explained how we would use this windfall for an exceptional park headquarters. Mr. Johnson at first took my comments humorously but, as I progressed, he became noticeably dejected. Then I admitted I was having my turn at the joking. I suggested he have the land surveyed and send me a map and application of a change of the monument boundary. I would try and have the castle excluded. He left in good spirits.

Weeks went by and we did not hear from Mr. Johnson. The administration would change March 4, 1933, and I wanted to get the final monument proclamation signed by President Hoover well before that date. I wrote Alfred Johnson but received no answer. Then I telegraphed him. In response to my wire Congressman Arentz informed me that Johnson and Scott had learned that if the land they desired were to be excised from the reserved area it would be open to filing by war veterans and that such filings would take precedence over any made by themselves. Faced with this dilemma, Johnson and Scott asked we proceed to have Death Valley National Monument created and petitioned for legislation at the subsequent congressional session permitting them to purchase the land on which the castle had been built. We also had to promise mining men and other business interests that we would seek legislation to permit continuance of mining in the monument.

It should be noted that Mr. Johnson may have omitted part of the story about the land on which the castle was built. There have been statements to the effect that Johnson had obtained land title but that it was six miles distant, or one township away.

We moved quickly after the castle problem was solved. Secretary Wilbur and I brought the entire plan together with abstracts of the reports to President Hoover's attention along with a draft of the suggested proclamation and a map of the proposed boundaries. Strong support was offered by Congressmen Englebright and Arentz and by Senators Johnson and Samuel M. Shortridge. Valuable help also came from conservation organizations and interested individuals. Among the latter was Ralph P. Merritt who had lived in Inyo County, knew Death Valley well, and who for years had been a close friend and business associate of the President.

On February 11, 1933, President Hoover signed the proclamation establishing the monument. The area involved was so great that it is one of the largest members of the national park and monument system. The presidential proclamation set aside this vast area permanently for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, and Scotty's Castle was a part of it.

The next move was to obtain legislation promised to meet the situation of Johnson and Scott as well as laws to permit resumption of mining and prospecting. Congressman Arentz introduced H.R. 14646 to accomplish both objectives. On February 24 the House Public Lands committee reported the bill favorably. Congress adjourned before the bill could be reached on the calendar.

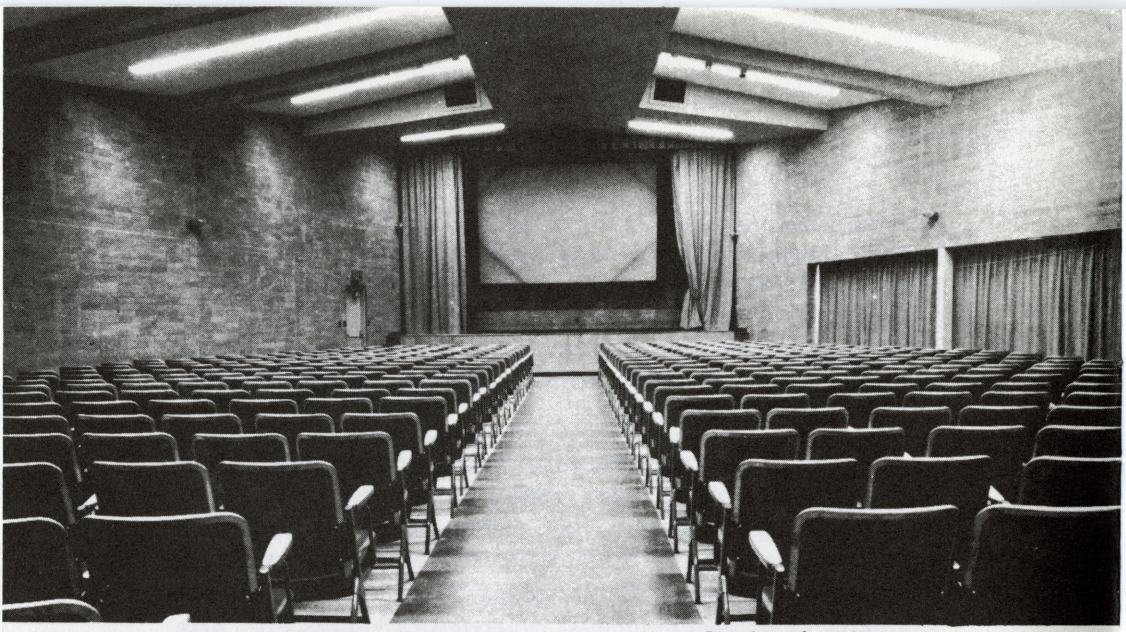
The new Congress, the 73rd, convened in March. Congressman Englebright introduced a bill to permit resumption of mining. This was quickly passed by both houses and signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 20, 1933. Another Englebright bill to permit the castle builders to buy the land they needed was also enacted by Congress but

Secretary of Interior recommended its veto although he had previously approved my recommendation of the measure when it had been introduced in Congress. President Roosevelt vetoed the bill. The reversal of the stand by Secretary Ickes was on the premise that a way should be opened for the government to again acquire the land should Johnson or Scott sell the castle.

In the 74th Congress, early in 1935, a new castle bill H.R. 2476, was offered and passed. It was signed by President Roosevelt August 22, 1935. The new law contained the restriction on future transfer desired by Secretary Ickes. The patent for the land was issued November 17, 1937, in the name of Johnson alone. It covered 1,529 acres.

Johnson died in Hollywood January 7, 1948, at the age of 75. Under his will the castle passed to the Gospel Foundation. The Secretary of Interior was duly notified. No funds were available for purchase of the lands. The Gospel Foun-

View from Patio



Interior of Auditorium
National Park Service Photograph

dation still owns the property. In the tourist season they keep it open for visitors and maintain guide service. Some rooms are available for overnight guests.

From the standpoint of national park policy the mining authority legislation some day should be repealed. The region has been explored from end to end for nearly 100 years and, aside from borax, salt, and talc, no minerals of value have been found except in small quantities soon exhausted.

Scotty at first feared possible regulation that would make him feel he had lost his freedom, but he adjusted himself to the national monument and was cooperative in his dealings with the National Park Service. He and Johnson were both close friends of the park's superintendents, Col. John R. White from 1933 to 1938, and T. R. Goodwin from 1938 to 1954. I last saw Scotty in a hospital at Las Vegas November 12, 1951. He died January 5, 1954 at the age of 81. He is buried on a hill above the castle.

The Death Valley National Monument stands today as a most valuable national possession. It should receive the fullest protection from exploitation that will in any way detract from its beauty, color and natural setting.

BORAX IN DEATH VALLEY

The story of men and borax in Death Valley is a lively and interesting chapter in western history. First to find borax in the Valley was a French prospector, Isadore Daunet; but gold, not borax, was the magic word in 1875, and his discovery went unnoticed.

Six years later another gold prospector, Aaron Winters, learned about borax and realized that acres of "cottonball" borax lay on the floor of the Valley near Furnace Creek. (Cottonball—so-called for its appearance—is a form of *ulexite*, a borax of high purity.) Winters shipped samples of the rich borate to a prominent San Francisco businessman, William T. Coleman, who bought the properties for $20,000.

When news of Winters' prosperity reached Daunet, he hurried back into the Valley and located acres of cottonball near Bennett's Well. By the time Coleman's first crew arrived, Daunet's Eagle Borax Works was already in operation. But troubles, climaxed by impurity of final product and soaring midsummer heat, beset the Eagle Borax Company; Daunet subsequently committed suicide and the plant was abandoned. Its total output: 130 tons.

Coleman's cottonball lay exposed on the Valley floor needing no mining equipment more complex than a shovel. Crews were brought in to harvest the ore and Coleman built the Harmony Borax Works adjacent to the cottonball lands. But since producing borax in the hot summer months soon proved as impossible at Harmony as it had been at Eagle, Coleman built the Amargosa Borax Works some fifty miles east of the Valley at the site of another rich cottonball discovery. He was thus able to process borax throughout the year.

In 1882 a new form of borate was discovered in the Funeral Mountains bordering Death Valley on the east. This borate, named *colemanite*, had to be mined, rather than shoveled, and required more complicated processing than cottonball. (A small building comprising the office, miners'

bunkhouse and ore checking station at one of these deposits was moved to Furnace Creek Ranch in 1954. It became the original Death Valley Museum and can be seen today, surrounded by objects from the old days in the Valley.)

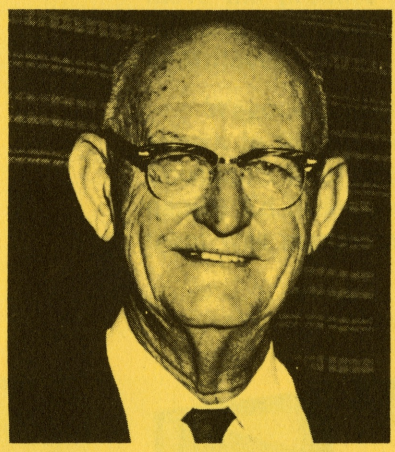
Coleman's enterprise and imagination were put to test with the problem of transporting borax out of Death Valley to the railroad at Mojave 165 miles away. With a growing demand for borax and an apparently unlimited reserve of crude ore, Coleman had to find the quickest, surest way to move his product out of Death Valley, across 165 barren miles of California desert to the nearest railroad junction at Mojave.

Wagons pulled by multiple mule teams were not unknown in the desert in those days, but until J. W. S. Perry, Coleman's local superintendent, and a young mule-skinner named Ed Stiles set to work on the problem, a twelve mule team was maximum. It was Perry and Stiles who thought

William C. Bullard, National Park Service, showing some books of historical interest on Death Valley to Mrs. A. C. Gonzales and daughter Anita.

Dedication
Program

RALPH P. MERRITT



HON. CHARLES A. BROWN

Progr

VISITOR CENTER

DEDICA

Death Valley Nat

November 12, 1960

Master of Ceremonies—Paul Pal

Musical Selection . . . . . *Trona High School Band*
Mr. George Pilcher, Director

The National Anthem . . . . . *Band*

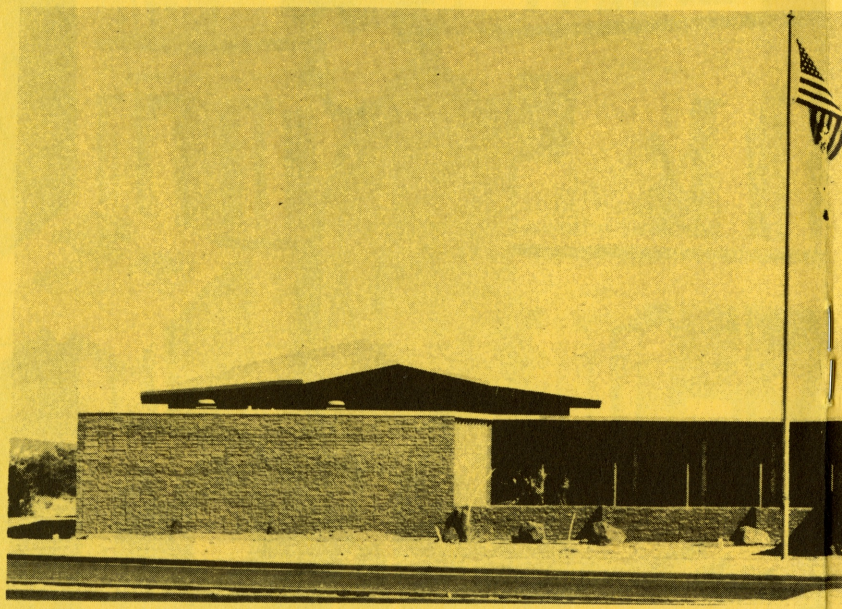
Invocation . . . . . *Rev. Oscar Slifer*
Pastor, First Methodist Church, La Puente, California

Welcome . . . . . *Granville B. Liles*
Superintendent, Death Valley National Monument

Introduction of Guests . . . . *Master of Ceremonies*

Musical Selection . . . . . *Band*

Address . . . . . *Ralph P. Merritt*
President, Death Valley '49ers



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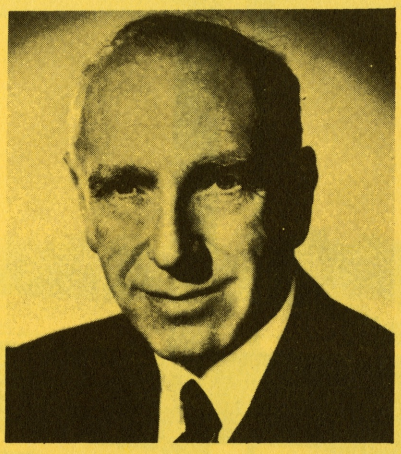
• 10:00 a.m.

er, Director, Death Valley '49ers



THE RIGHT HON. LORD CLITHEROE, P.C.

Address . . . . . *Hon. Charles A. Brown*
Senator, State of California

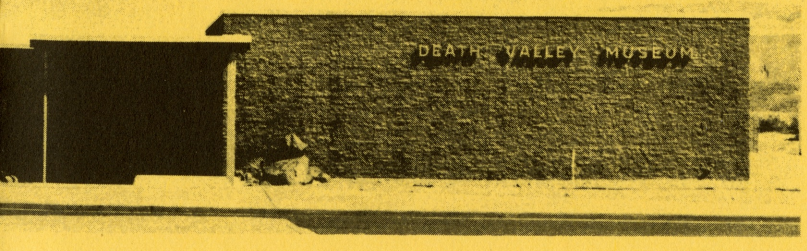
Address . . . . . *The Rt. Hon. Lord Clitheroe, P.C.*
Chairman, Board of Directors
Borax (Holdings) Limited

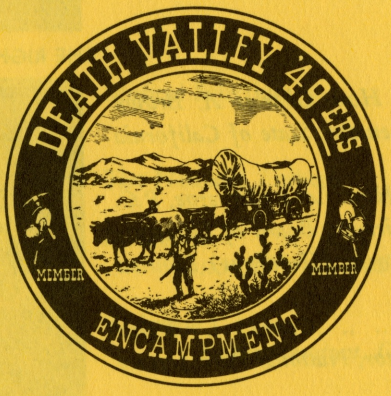
Address . . . . . *Conrad L. Wirth*
Director, National Park Service

Musical Selection . . . . . *Band*

Benediction . . . . . *Rev. Sidney A. Raemers*
Lake Mead Base, U.S. Naval Admin. Unit
Las Vegas, Nevada

CONRAD L. WIRTH




DEATH VALLEY 49 ERS
MEMBER
MEMBER
ENCAMPMENT

View from Museum Lobby

of hitching two ten mule teams together to form a hundred-foot long twenty mule team. Perry designed wagons massive and sturdy enough to carry the borax and withstand the rugged journey; Perry, too, laid out the route of the mule teams.

The wagons, which were built in Mojave for $900, had rear wheels 7 feet high and front wheels 5 feet high, each with steel tires 8 inches wide and 1 inch thick. The hubs were 18 inches in diameter and 22 inches in length. The spokes, of split oak, measured 5½ inches wide at the hub. The axle-trees were made of solid steel bars, 3½ inches square. The wagon beds were 16 feet long, 4 feet wide and 6 feet deep. Empty, each wagon weighed 7,800 pounds. Loaded with borax, it weighed 31,800 pounds. Two such loaded wagons, plus the water tank, (which held 1,200 gallons and weighed 9,600 pounds) made a total load of 73,200 pounds or 36½ tons.

From 1883 to 1889, the twenty mule teams hauled borax out of Death Valley, over the steep Panamint Mountains and across the desert to the railroad at Mojave. Despite the heat—and temperatures often rose to 130° — the teams pulled their heavy loads along the rough trails, traveling 15 to 18 miles a day. It was a twenty-day round trip. During the five years that they were in constant use, the twenty mule teams carried twenty million pounds of borax out of the Valley—a considerable tribute to ingenuity of the designers, and to the stamina of the teamsters, swampers and animals.

In 1890, Coleman's entire borax holdings were sold to F. M. "Borax" Smith, a successful borax prospector and producer who owned extensive borate properties in the desert regions of western Nevada. Incorporating his own and Coleman's properties as the Pacific Coast Borax Co. that same year, Smith proved an energetic and resourceful borax producer. In 1893 he opened an eastern sales office (with young Stephen Mather as advertising and promotion manager), built railroads to connect his mines with the mainline railroads, and during the later '90s sought British capital and markets to expand his business further. As a result, Borax Consolidated, Limited was formed in 1899 with headquarters in London. Smith was the largest shareholder in the new company and managing director of its American affairs.

The *Lila C.* mine, seven miles west of Death Valley Junction was next to be worked. *Lila C.* can be recognized today by its tailing dumps—a series of white patches lying against the low black hills. Until a railroad could be built to haul ore to the Junction, the twenty mule teams were hitched up and the huge lumbering borax wagons rolled once again.

In 1914 Smith's shares in the company were sold to British investors and his association with Borax Consolidated, Limited ended. The British corporation established Pacific Coast Borax as a division to continue operation of its

business in America. (In 1956, after a transfer of assets in exchange for stock, Pacific Coast Borax Co. became an American company. In turn, after merging with U.S. Potash Company, a pioneer New Mexico corporation, the name of the new organization became United States Borax & Chemical Corporation.)

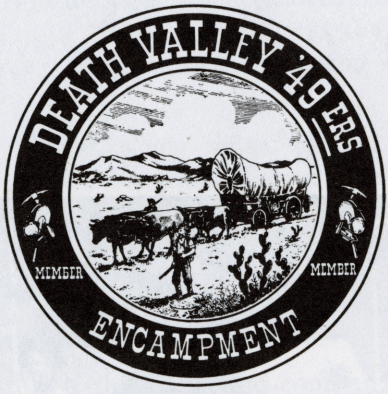
When the *Lila C.* was exhausted, the camp of Ryan, some 15 miles to the east, was opened. Ryan has been preserved by the Borax Company and can be seen today—a small ghost town perched against the mountainside just off the road from Death Valley Monument to the Junction. The Ryan mines were worked extensively until the Borax company discovered sodium borate ore at Boron, California, in 1925. This brought the principal Death Valley borax operations to an end.

Borax Consolidated, Limited changed its name to Borax (Holdings) Limited in 1956 and is the firm which donated

In the Patio

the 90-acre tract of land on which the new Museum and Visitor Center is built.

Many Death Valley place names honor Borax company men: Zabriskie Point, one of the most spectacular promontories in the Valley was named for Christian Brevoort Zabriskie, successor to "Borax" Smith and Mt. Smith, in the Black Mountains, commemorates the man himself. Gower Gulch was named for George T. Gower, father of Harry P. Gower, a borax company official for more than forty years. Mt. Perry, in the Black Mountains, honors J. W. S. Perry, Borax company superintendent who organized the original twenty mule teams laid out their routes. The camp of Ryan was named for John Ryan, longtime manager of the company's borax mines; and the town of Baker, formerly a station on the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad, was named for R. C. Baker, first managing director of Borax Consolidated, Limited, and the camp at Gerstley, also formerly a station of the T & T R.R. and a mining camp, was named for J. Gerstley, the second managing director of Borax Consolidated, Limited.



THE DEATH VALLEY '49ers, Inc.

The Death Valley Museum and Visitor Center has been made possible through the vision and cooperation of four agencies, two public and two private.

The Death Valley '49ers, Inc., a non-profit civic organization composed of men and women who know and love our desert, had the honor of initiating the museum proposal during 1953 when George W. Savage was serving as the organization's president. During the seven-year period intervening between the initiation and the 1960 dedication, this civic group, through its Board of Directors and several special committees, worked constantly toward the dedication event of November 12, 1960.

At the outset President Savage appointed a committee headed by John Anson Ford, the '49er 1950-51 president and for many years chairman of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, to explore means of obtaining a museum. With Chairman Ford, Ralph P. Merritt, a former Inyo County man with valuable connections in both Washington and Sacramento, was named as co-chairman. Also on the initial committee were Atty. Paul Palmer, then the immediate past president of the organization, and Arthur W. Walker, '49er treasurer, who had wide experience as a legislative representative in both the State and Federal capitals.

The National Park Service had some preliminary museum plans which, unfortunately, had been deferred from time to time for budgetary reasons. The initial conferences of the '49er committee resulted in the report suggesting that a State appropriation be sought. State Senator Charles A. Brown of Shoshone, one of the senior members of the California Legislature and an Inyo County resident for more than half a century, next introduced a bill which authorized the State to erect the museum as a State Beaches and Parks project. The measure passed, as did a subsequent directive for an appropriation of $350,000 from the tide-

lands oil royalty funds of several millions which are earmarked for park use. What requires but a sentence to relate necessitated several seasons of activity, numerous conferences with legislative committees and with DeWitt Nelson, chief of natural resources, as well as with Newton Drury, then director of the Division of Beaches and Parks and a former director of the National Park Service.

In the final agreement the State turned its appropriation over to the Federal Government for erection of the museum and portions of the Visitor Center with the proviso for continued administration and operation by the National Park Service.

Before the museum could be erected, however, a site needed selection and approval. Several suggested locations on both Federal and private land were inspected. The one felt most suitable, both because of central location and water supply, was a parcel north of the Furnace Creek date gardens generally known as that of the "old airport." This was donated to the National Park Service by the owners, Borax (Holdings) Limited, through its subsidiary, the Death Valley Hotel Co.

After the location had been decided, the National Park Service conceived the idea of combining the museum with a visitor and information center. An auditorium was included in the facility, which became a triangle of three major structures surrounding a landscaped patio, the headquarters offices, library and artifacts study constituting the third side. Instead of just the $350,000 structures erected with state funds, the project grew to an enterprise worth nearly a million.

It is not difficult to see why such a major project with its numerous facets took more than a year or two to bring into accomplishment. The final result is probably a far more advanced one than was dreamed of in 1953 when the initial campaign was launched.

The Death Valley '49ers are naturally proud of the part they were able to play in initiating this beautiful triumvirate of buildings. They see it as especially fitting that the museum is being dedicated during one of their annual Death Valley Encampments and also that their 1960 president, Ralph P. Merritt, served as co-chairman of the organization's original committee.

To the Death Valley '49ers the Death Valley Museum and Visitor Center is by no means the end. When ground was first broken for this facility during the 1957 encampment, while L. Burr Belden was '49er president, a second museum committee was named and charged with the tracing down and obtaining of suitable artifacts. Many displays in the new museum have resulted from the work of this group while numerous others, together with a wealth of source material, may be found in the preparatory labora-

National Park Service Photograph by Wm. C. Bullard

tory and library of the center. Needless to say, this is a work which will never be completed. Also President Merritt has suggested that a library of Death Valleyana be a future '49er project and noted that today's new museum structure can easily accommodate such an additional wing.

During the seven years the museum has been in the planning and construction phases, there have been numerous conferences between the four related agencies, particularly between the '49ers and the National Park Service, concerning exhibit material and interpretation. Museums the world over tend to fall into two general types, one of "things" in which artifacts are displayed as collections; the other of "ideas" in which interpretive charts and dioramas seek to implement the story. In the new Death Valley Museum its visioners and creators have sought to combine these two ideas in the hope the end result will better tell Death Valley's matchless story .

Although the Death Valley '49ers are proud of the fact their members extend to the Atlantic seaboard and into several foreign countries, there are doubtless some who may wonder about this civic group. In brief, the Death Valley '49ers, Inc. started as a band of men and women who worked to stage the Death Valley Centennial celebration of 1949 and who, having devoted months to the staging of that spectacle, were unwilling to turn back. In subsequent years the '49ers have staged an annual fall encampment of three or four days, generally held in the forepart of November, at which upwards of 15,000 visitors come to see and enjoy the Death Valley National Monument as it is portrayed in song, art, story and tour by qualified members of the '49ers, by Park Service personnel and others.

These encampments are the major annual project of the Death Valley '49ers, the organization of men and women who gladly give of their time and talent to assist in carrying the story of the Death Valley National Monument to an ever widening circle of friends.

CALIFORNIA'S SHARE — A GIFT TO ALL THE PEOPLE

Within this broad, big, beautiful desert which is Death Valley, the like of which occurs nowhere else, stands the Museum which tells the story of this area of grandeur, interpreting for scholar and sightseer the splendor of Death Valley. The State of California contributed $350,000 toward its construction.

The State's active part started several years ago, in 1954. At that time the Death Valley '49ers wrote to the Borax Company with a carbon copy to the Division of Beaches and Parks—that's all it took! And although the way has been paved with gubernatorial veto, roadblocks because of State legal provisions, design requirements, and other "important" incidentals, today this printed program

Drawing by Cecil Doty, Western Office Design and Construction, National Park Service, San Francisco.
National Park Service Photograph by Ed Menning

commemorates the construction and opening of the museum.

Of all within the State service, two persons should be singled out. One, the Honorable Charles Brown, member of the Senate from the County in which the museum is located; the other Newton B. Drury, former Chief of the Division of Beaches and Parks. When the two got together early in 1955, along with Joseph R. Knowland, then a member of the California State Park Commission, it was only a matter of time.

The biggest stumbling block of all came after the Legislature appropriated the money. It was found that the State is not permitted to spend funds for property upon which it does not hold title. After amicable negotiations, a pact was agreed upon whereby the State would take title to 1.25 acres of the 90 acres being deeded to the National Park Service for administration and interpretative purposes by Borax (Holdings) Limited. A contingent provision was even placed into effect: in the event the National Park Service was unable to build the building with State funds, the Borax Company willingly agreed to deed the acreage to the State for the purpose of having the State erect the museum on the site. Everyone was in agreement; everyone would do everything legally possible to gain the museum, for everyone wanted the museum.

California is indeed pleased that the museum is a fact. It is the State's hope that similar museums (however, erected on State Parks and staffed by State personnel) will be constructed in many areas; like within the Redwoods and in the Central Valley. One is now nearing construction at Morro Bay which will interpret the natural magnificence of the Pacific Ocean. Another will soon be under construction at Donner Pass interpreting that rugged snow bound country which halted the members of the Donner Party more than a century ago. The Death Valley Museum, an interpretative center, provides a similar link in interpreting the natural and historical values which time has determined here.

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IN DEATH VALLEY

Here in this valley of fierce beauty of shape and color, here where powerful and ageless earth-forces are so well exemplified, the National Park Service is in charge as trustee and guardian for the American people. The story of this coming of the Park Service goes back to 1927 when the Pacific Coast Borax Company invited Stephen T. Mather, Director of the National Park Service, and his Assistant Director, Horace M. Albright, to tour Death Valley. Mr. Albright became Director in 1929 and initiated a number of detailed field studies by members of the National Park Service organization. Armed with these preliminary studies, Mr. Albright was able to get a temporary withdrawal of the Death Valley Region by Executive Order No. 5408 of July 25, 1930. This order maintained the status quo pending further study and classification of the region.

For several years, discussion continued between the Park Service and the local and private interests on how best to preserve Death Valley and its region. From this healthy tug-o-war between public and private interests that is our American way of doing these things, agreement was reached that Death Valley should be set aside as a National Monument. At the same time legislation was to be obtained from Congress permitting the continuance of prospecting and mining and the protection of mining claims.

On February 11, 1933, President Hoover signed the proclamation creating Death Valley National Monument reserving an area of almost 3,000 square miles. On June 13, 1933, President Roosevelt signed into law the bill on mining rights in Death Valley.

Over a quarter of a century has passed. The National Park Service in Death Valley has progressed under the administration of four superintendents: John R. White,

who acted in this capacity while serving as superintendent of Sequoia National Park—1933 to 1938; T. R. Goodwin—1938 to 1954; Fred J. Binnewies—1954 to 1960; and Granville B. Liles, the incumbent superintendent.

During these years the mission of the National Park Service in Death Valley has been to develop in visitors a greater appreciation of the desert and of the tremendous forces that modify the earth's crust. These combine to create great scenic values that develop interest, provide inspiration, and deepen understanding of the works of nature. Death Valley provides the student and scientist with a superlative example of desert physiography for study and research. Through the preservation and recounting of the human history of Death Valley, the National Park Service seeks to create an appreciation of the heroic struggle of men and women with the harshest extremes of physical environment. I seeks to preserve the historic evidences of the adjustment of these pioneers, prospectors, and settlers to this environment and to retell their story.

The first task of the National Park Service was to provide access to the area for the increasing number of visitors. To do so it has built 196 miles of paved roads and 238 miles of graded gravel and dirt roads. Then, to enable people to get close to the valley's magnificent scenery, it has established 8 campgrounds with space for 109 campsites and built 8.4 miles of foot trails.

The MISSION 66 program for the development of the National Park System has provided Death Valley National Monument with 21 new buildings, 7 miles of road reconstruction, and 5 miles of water and sewer lines. During the next 5 years of MISSION 66 additional buildings and utilities, roads and trails, picnic and campground areas, comfort stations and parking space will be built.

All of these facilities are to bring the visitor in contact with Death Valley. But then the great task of the Park Service is to interpret the valley. It is for this purpose that

the National Park Service has contributed to the building of the fine Death Valley Museum—the great Visitor Center for the interpretation and administration of Death Valley National Monument. In this endeavor the Service, working within the laws and procedures governing Federal agencies, cooperated with the State of California, which gave the initial $350,000 toward construction of the building, Borax (Holdings) Limited which donated the 90 acres of land for the building site, and the Death Valley '49ers who sponsored the project and obtained public support necessary to bring it to fruition.

As its share in this joint venture in public interpretation of a great National Monument, the National Park Service provided $425,000 of Federal funds. Part of this money plus $35,000 from the State contribution, was used by the Park Service to plan, prepare and design the entire building to meet the approval of the California State Park Commission. The Park Service prepared the ground for the whole building and later landscaped it, built the Administration section and also planned, prepared, and installed all the museum exhibits, and purchased and installed all the equipment in the building.

Under its agreement with the State of California, the Park Service is to staff, manage, and maintain the Death Valley Museum to provide the maximum educational benefit and enjoyment for the visitor.

The Death Valley Museum was designed by Welton Becket and Associates—Architects, Engineers, of San Francisco, and its construction was supervised by the National Park Service's Western Office of Design and Construction in San Francisco. The museum exhibits were prepared and installed by the Service's Western Museum Laboratory also in San Francisco.

The National Park Service is proud to be associated with the other three sponsors of this building, especially in providing an example of cooperation—sometimes difficult

but finally successful — between Federal and State park agencies, a private business corporation, and a non-profit association.

The Death Valley Museum and Visitor Center will help the Park Service fulfill its mission to interpret Death Valley to the increasing numbers of people who visit the National Monument. (This year over 350,000 visitors are expected. Conservatively estimated on a 6 percent increase per year, this number will grow to over 500,000 in 1966 and to better than 700,000 in 1972.) A number of roadside interpretive signs have been installed and more are in planning and preparation. A free informational booklet is given to visitors, and seven self-guiding auto tour booklets are in planning. Recent research studies both by the Park Service and by cooperating agencies have made it possible for us to know a great deal more about Death Valley. The results of these research studies in history, archeology, geology and other aspects of natural history, such as the wild burro and the desert bighorn, will be made available to students of Death Valley and to the general public. The visitor can obtain more immediate information on the features of this National Monument through the illustrated talks that are given nightly by Park Service uniformed personnel.

There can be no effective preservation of Death Valley National Monument and no aid to its visitors without a trained staff of Park Rangers and Ranger - naturalists. These are the men in uniform who are here for the protection, guidance, and information of visitors. Other personnel, equally necessary, assist the superintendent in the administration and maintenance of the nearly 3,000 square miles of Death Valley National Monument.

That is the story of the National Park Service in Death Valley—a story of development and interpretation for today's visitors accompanied by an equal zeal for preserving intact for our many tomorrows this great American heritage—Death Valley.

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